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Simon Burns MP
Department of Health
79 Whitehall
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Dear Mr Burns

HEALTH TECHNICAL MEMORANDUMS – ‘FIRECODE’

I, and the members of the Association have great concern that the Department of Health are proposing that they will no longer be responsible for the production of the national Fire Safety Guidance, issued under the Health Technical Memorandum series ‘Firecode’, with no clear indication of who will continue to produce these vital guidance documents.

Nationally produced/published specific fire safety guidance for healthcare premises, for local interpretation and implementation is essential for maintaining the safety of people using healthcare facilities, due to the higher standards required in these premises. This a crucial requirement over and above the general fire safety guidance, produced via the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and Building Regulations Approved Document ‘B’, BS 9999 all refer to ‘Firecode’ as the guidance for Healthcare Premises.

The members and I are keen for an assurance, with the significant reforms that are taking place within Healthcare, the importance of Firecode and the role the guidance plays in safeguarding vulnerable patients will not be lost as a result of the changes. The Association is very willing and keen to continue to be involved in any future production of this vital guidance.

With the reduction of fire cover due to local authority budget restraints, the requirement for staff training within Firecode, becomes fundamental to ensure all occupants of Healthcare premises are in a safe environment. Thoroughly trained in evacuation procedures, fire fighting and fully aware of the organisations policy and procedure.

This can only be effectively carried out by experienced, fully qualified Fire Safety Advisors/Officers, as required in the Firecode management document. This has been impressively demonstrated in the recent large hospital fires, where staff training came to the fore, evacuation was swift and there was no life loss. The National NHS statistics for fire deaths and injuries over the past years also add credence to the effectiveness of my members.

Yours faithfully

K. B. Fairholme GFireE,
Chairman National Association of Healthcare Fire Officers